

For Immediate Release  
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## **City of Milwaukee Health Department Launches Annual West Nile Surveillance Program**

Mayor Tom Barrett and Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker held a press conference today to kick off the city's annual West Nile Virus (WNV) public educational and surveillance program. Prevention messages will focus on limiting the occurrence of WNV in the community.

Health officials outlined current WNV-related activities designed to limit the spread of disease in the Milwaukee community, including targeted larvicide application, mosquito surveillance and trap placement, as well as reporting networks to capture cases of WNV infection in humans. This season, 20 mosquito traps have been set up to assess levels of mosquito infection in the Milwaukee County area.

WNV infection can be avoided. Citizens are urged to follow precautionary measures including limiting outdoor activity during periods of peak mosquito activity (dusk and dawn), wearing long-sleeved clothing and long pants, applying repellant containing DEET, and repairing holes in windows and door screens. Eliminating pools of stagnant water around or near the house or other buildings that serve as breeding habitats for mosquitoes is also recommended, including emptying standing water in rain gutters, flower pots, cans, tires or other containers. "We are approaching peak season for West Nile Virus in our area, so it's important for people to observe these simple measures to aid in minimizing risk of this disease," said Mayor Tom Barrett.

West Nile virus is transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes acquire WNV from certain bird species that carry the virus. So far in 2007, no human cases of WNV have been reported in the state of Wisconsin. In addition, no mosquito pools tested have come back positive for WNV. "However, in 2006 the MHD documented a record 92 mosquito pools that tested positive for WNV, which represent a four-fold increase from previous years. No birds have tested positive in Milwaukee County this year to date," said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker.

Only a small fraction of individuals bitten by an infected mosquito will become ill with WNV-related disease. Less than 1% of these individuals will progress to more serious neuroinvasive diseases including WNV-related encephalitis or meningitis. Symptoms of WNV infection include fever, fatigue and muscle ache.

For more information on WNV visit [www.milwaukee.gov/health](http://www.milwaukee.gov/health)